

# Pedestrian bridge over Fox River in Aurora in spotlight



The Fox River pedestrian bridge would connect parking lots on the west bank of the river downtown with RiverEdge Park on the east bank, crossing through Blues Island. (Steve Lord / Beacon-News)

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**A**urora officials are looking to extend the time they have to use a \$2 million grant from the Kane County Forest Preserve District that was given toward building a pedestrian bridge over the Fox River near RiverEdge Park.

Members of the City Council's Planning and Development Committee have recommended an amendment to the intergovernmental agreement between the city and the Forest Preserve District that would provide the grant.

Stephane Phifer, Aurora's planning and zoning director, said the two entities first struck the agreement in 2010, then amended it in 2012 to allow the city to use \$350,000 of the grant toward engineering for the bridge and the project it is part of. This second amendment would give the city until 2020 to take advantage of the grant, which would put it in the same sequence as a Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality grant the city has been promised from the federal government toward the rest of the grant, Phifer said.

"We need a little more time than was allowed in the 2010 agreement," she said.

The pedestrian bridge would connect parking lots on the west bank of the river downtown with RiverEdge Park on the east bank. It would cross through Blues Island, a long, skinny island in the river at that point. The bridge would allow for better use of the west bank parking, both for RiverEdge Park activities and for people going to catch buses and trains at the Transportation Center across North Broadway from RiverEdge, city officials said.

Because of the commuter train aspect, the pedestrian bridge was folded into a bigger project to change and improve some things at the Transportation Center, including relocating the [Pace bus](#) pulse point, which right now sits along Route 25 but would be moved closer to the trains; providing more parking; and adding a traffic signal to the entrance to the Transportation Center and its parking lot.

The city secured the federal grant for the overall project of about \$8.65 million, and it also applied to the [Illinois Department of Transportation](#) for a \$2 million enhancement grant for it.

The federal money is given to cover at least 80 percent of a project, with the local entity, in this case the city of Aurora , paying 20 percent. The \$8.65 million would cover only about 60 percent of the cost, which means the city can pursue third-party funding to make up the difference to the 80 percent level.

Phifer said the city is trying to get the federal funding "expedited" to get the money sooner than 2020. But she said even if it does not come any quicker, the city is guaranteed to get it then. City officials also are going to ask for more money toward the project at the same time.

"The additional money, well, we'll just have to see," she said.

At one point, city officials estimated the entire project to be about \$14 million, but because the engineering is not finished and the project is not even ready to bid, no one knows what the actual cost would be.

"We're in the midst of Phase 2 engineering, which is where we begin to finalize some of these things," Phifer said.

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